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Restored Voices: A Living Link to the Past

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When the 2nd Maine Infantry marched down the hill from the Essex Street Armory on May 14, 1861, it halted in front of the James Crosby house at 13 Broadway. There, the soldiers heard speeches by Mayor Isaiah Stetson and Vice President Hanibal Hamlin. There, Colonel Jameson received a flag from the townswomen. There, crowds shouted; the Bangor Cornet Band played; passengers on The Daniel Webster cheered; the Brewer Artillery field pieces boomed. And, there, in the drizzling rain, aboard the railroad cars, the 2nd Maine began its journey into the silence of history.

The Civil War soon ended. The tattered flag was laid to rest in the Maine State Archives-- forgotten, along with the memory of the house at 13 Broadway. Despite its earlier renown, only a few disparate remnants of the Bangor regiment survived.

Among them is a set of twenty-four unpublished letters that comprise the foundation of this ongoing project. They tell the tale of a regiment in its first year--stories of young men who fought for posterity.

The current phase of this study expands those stories to include the voices of the descendants of the soldiers in the 2nd Maine who still reside in the Bangor area. Comprised of a series of oral history recordings, transcripts and ancillary documents, it provides a living link to the past.

The first two interviews will be archived at the FAU library this spring. The completed project will also be housed in the University of Maine Folklife Center.